Research on the EPS Teaching Mode and its Applications to English Phonetic Teaching from the Perspective of Memetics

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Abstract

The Integration of Memetics and English Public Speaking teaching mode (EPS) is a great reform to the current teaching of English pronunciation. It enables students to change the traditional image of phonetic learning, recognize that there are rules as to the study of English pronunciation, and help students develop their practical ability. This paper points out that such problems as teachers’ negligence of phonetic teaching and reading drill, the inflexibility of teaching approaches, as well as the lacking of practical training in pronunciation still exist in current English phonetic teaching. Applying EPS teaching mode to phonetic teaching based on the theory of Memes could solve these problems effectively. Through a proper selection of phonetic materials, the approach of imitation and recitation, together with the positive creation of practical environment for phonetic learning, students could participate in phonetic study actively and initiatively, which would therefore enhance the efficiency of English phonetic teaching.

Keywords: Memetics, English Public Speaking (EPS), phonetic teaching; application.

1. INTRODUCTION

Integrating the meme theory into the teaching of English pronunciation is a kind of breakthrough in current English pronunciation teaching, which enriches the classroom teaching content, changes the way of phonetic teaching, and enables the students to accept more effective and systematic phonetic training. The application of English public speaking teaching mode in English phonetic teaching enables students to contact the real language materials, improve and polish their English tones and intonation, learn to speak English, and cultivate students’ practical English ability. It also enables students to understand the complex rules between English phonemes and phonetic symbols, improve students’ presentation ability within a short period of time. Students could enhance their pronunciation ability through reading textbooks, or even, through English songs, poetry, drama, and other famous speeches. Also, students could apply these abilities to practice through various imitation and continuous phonetic reproduction and memory.

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2. Theory of memes and English public speaking teaching mode (EPS)

2.1 The theory of memes

Memetics is a new discipline in linguistics research in China, which mainly refers to the theory of mental content based on an analogy with Darwinian evolution, originating from the popularization of Richard Dawkins’1976 book “The Selfish Gene”. Proponents describe memetics as an approach to evolutionary models of cultural information transfer. The meme, analogous to a gene, is conceived as a unit of culture which is hosted in the minds of one or more individuals, and which could reproduce itself, thereby jumping from mind to mind. Gene is carried out by genetic reproduction, while meme disseminate culture primarily by imitation. The process of “meme” could effectively promote the development of language, mainly because memes could promote the replication and dissemination of language. There are mainly two means of reproductive and disseminative patterns: different reproductive forms with the same content; different content by the same reproductive and disseminative means. Both forms could effectively promote the development of language. Meme could help spread the culture, ideas, customs and habits of a person or an area. During the dissemination process, the content that is disseminated might vary to some degree due to the different target receptors. There are mainly four stages through which memes are disseminated from one host to another: the first one is the stage of assimilation. At this stage, memes jump into the memory of the host, and these memes are dominant, easy to be understood and accepted by the host; the second one is retention stage. During this period, memes stay longer in the host’s brain, the longer time they stay, the more favorable to the host’s memory; the third stage is the expression stage. At this stage, the reproductive from begin to change from hard memory to the things that accepted by the host. This is also the process of host expression; finally, the transmission stage. During this period, memes will be disseminated from the host to more potential hosts when the host could maintain its stability. Through these four stages, the path of memes’ continuous replication and dissemination is formed.

2.2 English public speaking teaching mode (EPS)

English public speaking teaching mode refers to the way of introducing pubic speaking skills into language teaching. This could correct the pronunciation of student wrongly promptly, strengthen the English language sense of students, and promote students’ language competence. As student’s time of learning English become longer and longer, students are equipped with the ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing by English. At this time, it is necessary to expand their knowledge of the western culture, helping the student foster a good habit of thinking in English. Students should learn to compare and appreciate Western and Chinese culture, understand some popular issues, and put forward their own views as to the social concern. Teaching by EPS could demonstrate the charm of speeches, and help students imitate the process of public speaking, enhance their ability of performance. Student could deal with the question in English speech contests or English debate contests more flexibly. Public speaking drills could help improve students’ following skills: Getting a general knowledge of English sound border relations; mastering basic knowledge of English language; acquiring the basic quality of public speaking; understanding the fundamental method of English public speaking; getting familiar with public speaking skills in special occasions, like new year messages, welcoming speech, guests introduction as well as opening
address; grasping to narrative skills of telling a story; learning to arousing public interest through quoting a story, scaring the audience and questioning, etc.; understanding the public speaking ways of celebrities; analyzing and studying the public speaking delivery methods of UK-US leaders.

As a new way of teaching, the EPS teaching mode has been adopted and carried on in numerous colleges and universities. Some even take English public speaking as an independent course. In this course, students’ pronunciation could be corrected and polished; their self-confidence of learning and speaking in English could be improved; their ability of applying what they’ve learned in class into practical use might also be improved. The detailed teaching contents during the process of phonetic teaching by the application of EPS mode are as follows:
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3. Problems in current English phonetic teaching

3.1 Teachers pay less attention to phonetic teaching.

Although English listening and speaking, reading and writing ability is very important for students, many teachers give more priority to reading and writing practice while neglect phonetic teaching. As a result, students are not able to communicate in English though they’ve learned English for many years. Some teachers begin to pay more attention to the teaching of pronunciation, but the priority is often given to listening practice like watching video clips and listening to English radio, while less time is spared for students to do oral practice. As a result, students still could not speak English.

3.2 Teachers neglect reading drills

Many teachers and students believe that the improvement of reading ability is a process of practice with no skill to learn, which cause students to pronounce wrongly and never be corrected. Moreover, the errors in students’ pronunciations are deepened each time during their practice, making correction more difficult. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to explain the reading skills in the initial periods of pronunciation instruction and practice. It is advisable to grasp such reading skills as elision, pause, stressing and so on first, and then consolidate the knowledge by reading or watching relative materials.

3.3 Inflexibility of teaching approaches

The study of pronunciation is in itself a dull process. Students might lose the interest to the study English pronunciation if teachers take a single teaching method. However at present the teachers are use teacher to lead the group in collective reading aloud, student with the way of teaching of reading, teacher correcting error, such learning approach often directly dampens the study enthusiasm of student, causes the student attention to be scattered, the learning efficiency is low. Therefore needs the teacher to inquire into the pronunciation way of teaching, understood that the psychology and study characteristics of student, this could guide the student actively to carry on the pronunciation study.

3.4 Lacking of practical training

The reason and purpose for students to learn English pronunciation is that students could use what they have learned skillfully and understand how to use various English expressions in different occasions. But there is little pronunciation training in current teaching process, as a result, students could not apply what they have learned into practical use. Students could easily on the pronunciation forget, no repeated training, when really need to use English students often at a loss. So teachers need to adjust their teaching methods, open pronunciation practice teaching and let students to apply what they have learned content, timely so as to develop the students’ ability of speech.
4. The essence of applying the EPS teaching mode to English phonetic teaching from the perspective of Memetics

4.1 Pay attention to the learning and training of language expression.

In the process of English learning, learning some basic elements of pronunciation is inevitable for they are the base for speaking and understanding English. In English there are such pronunciation unit as 12 vowel, 8 diphthongs and 24 consonant, however, these pronunciation units do not have features of distinguishing meanings. When students practice pronunciation, they need to pronunciation unit memory skilled, know the cooperate relationship between the standard pronunciation phoneme, cause these are the basic unit of a meme that could help students learn pronunciation well. It is possible that students are lacking of interest in those basic phonetic units at the beginning of pronunciation training. At this time, teachers should optimize the teaching materials, these pronunciation units presents through the form that the student is interested, like helping students study through the form of sentences and fragments, so that students could memorize the pronunciation more solid and stable.

4.2 Pay great attention to the accumulation of classical audio and video materials.

Before the replication of memes, students are required to master a large number of memes. With the fast development of English language, a lot of popular and classic English speech recordings and materials are available. On the one hand, these popular lectures are easy to be imitated, recited and referred to; on the other hand, the language content of these speech data is true, authentic pronunciation and intonation, suitable for students to learn. Teachers could allow students to observe these English speech materials, to imitate and even debate, so as to accumulate their own materials, these modules due to storage, and then according to the reality of the need to extract. The students in the process of accumulation of speech language materials in different forms of expression to the accumulation of the same content, and understand the expression of different forms of learning environment, expression of speech material, familiar with the contents of speech materials, students will use these lecture material in phonetics learning, so as to enhance the ability of speech.

4.3 Pay attention to the construction of language learning environment.

In meme learning process, teachers should create a good pronunciation environment for their students. Teachers should create suitable conditions for students so that students are happy to use English to express their views, in order to achieve successful replication speech. Such as students conducting diphthong learning process, teachers need to provide students with more speeches, lectures such as poetry, drama, storytelling, etc., to students setting up a theme speech expression, thus making the students collect material the process is relatively easy. In his speech, the speech, teachers guide students to fit between the students together to let the content and form of presentation to discuss, so it could play to their initiative, to actively participate in the process of speech, so that the students will pronunciation skills gradually increase.
5. The steps of applying EPS mode to English phonetic teaching from the perspective of Memetics

According to the theory of Memetics, applying EPS model to English phonetic teaching might experience four stages: namely, assimilation, retention, expression and transmission.

(1) Assimilation.

The assimilative phase of English pronunciation teaching, the teacher main duty of provides the good language atmosphere to the student, arouses the enthusiasm of student, making student’s content to the study have the interest. The teachers when provide the pronunciation material that could present through the form of video, audio frequency or picture, carries on the visual stimuli to the student, making the student want to understand the speech the content, could carries on the imitation study with the content of video or audio frequency, making the student have the basic understanding to the speech content, this helps training of student language sense.

(2) Retention.

In the mode of memory, mainly through imitation, reinforcement and application, is also the key period to improve students’ ability of speech expression. In the memory stage, the teacher should guide the students to conduct a thorough analysis of English materials, all kinds of memes are classified, and then targeted for memory, for example on the pronunciation of words, tone, stress, pause and assimilation of blasting, memory, imitation by memory. The memory process should be repeated, the more the number of times, the better the effect of memory. During the stage of memory, pronunciation meaning and intonation should all be memorized so as to help students develop a good sense of language.

(3) Expression and transmission.

Through expression and transmission, students could assimilate what they have memorized during the assimilative phase. Students will be able to freely express their views at this stage. Students during the beginning of the expression may be many difficulties, then you need to guide teachers to students, allow students to demonstrate through simulated reading of the results, you could use impromptu speech, SDI speech, debate and other forms of speech or speech contest to fulfill. In certain locales, such as Christmas, Halloween, teachers could allow students to prepare festival drama performances with these topics that usually learn their language and content knowledge into practice during the speech. In practice, students could re-examine their own pronunciation the learning process, to lay the foundation for future language learning. Through these activities, students will be able to remember memes flexible use and it is possible to achieve innovation output language.
6. The strategies for applying EPS mode to English pronunciation teaching from the perspective of the theory of Memes

(1) Choosing appropriate materials for phonetic teaching.

The accumulation of phonetic materials is indispensable in phonetic learning process. It is impossible to express views correctly and clearly without enough accumulation. Teachers play an important role in selecting and recommending original phonetic materials with a catchy rhyme so that students could read and recite much easier. On the contrary, if the chosen teaching materials are obscure or hard to read, students might lose interest in phonetic learning, and lack passion to participate in class activities. Teacher might prepare story-like phonetic training materials for younger students to read, recite and practice; while senior students could listen to broadcasting programs or watch TV programs in English-speaking countries like news, soap opera or talk shows. By getting access to those authentic and original materials, students could imitate and grasp standard pronunciation, and improve themselves gradually. Besides learning pronunciation, students could get access to a variety of culture in English-speaking countries, which is beneficial for students to shake off the Chinese way of thinking, and maintain their enthusiasm for learning English.

(2) Focusing on the application of imitation.

Imitation is essential to students’ phonetic learning in the primary stage. By imitation of various phonemes, students could get a global knowledge of phonetics, and their understanding and memory of phonetic phonemes might also be enhanced. Therefore, teachers should stress students’ imitation of tone, intonation, and every single pronunciation, design proper tasks for students to practice day by day, such as listening to an English song, learning a BBC or VOA news, etc. Students could download the required learning materials, imitate and record their performance so as to compare their pronunciation with the original ones and correct the mistakes timely.

(3) Mastering the application of recitation.

According to Memetics, memes are mainly duplicated through imitation and transmitted through by recitation. Through recitation, students accumulate sufficient knowledge about grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and pragmatic skills. During the process of recitation, students should learn phonetics, intonations and rhythm of the whole sentences by heart so as to achieve assimilation. It is advisable that students do recitation in a group so that they could monitor and help each other, promote mutual cooperation and communication, and improve the efficiency of learning.

(4) Creating environments for phonetic practice.

After imitation and memorization of memes, students need to carry on constant practical training and language drills to spot their shortage in pronunciation and convert what they have learned into their own ability. Therefore, teachers should try every mean to create and offer a nice English speaking environment for students to practice their pronunciation. Apart from presenting original materials, students are encouraged to take part in various extracurricular activities such as English public speaking contests, movie dubbing and drama performance. By these activities, students’ pronunciation would be polished, their competence of expressing
in English would be improved and their comprehensive ability of language application would be enhanced.

7. Conclusion

The process of learning phonetics is the process of reproduction, imitation, memorization and transmission of the memes. Students should follow the rules of phonetics, select the appropriate learning materials while learning English pronunciation. Through the process of memorizing recitation and repetitive practice, students might be able to present their phonetic acquisition in speeches. Meanwhile, students’ ability of expressing and communicating in English might also be enhanced after continuous training and practice. Teachers play a good guiding role for students to learn phonetics step by step and improve their language proficiency by constant learning and feedback. In the future research, we will make efforts to integrate more related methodology to improve the efficiency of phonetic teaching.

Reference:


